

STAFF REPORT

To: Planning and Economic Development Committee

From: Brenda Mills, Economic Development Specialist
Community and Economic Development

Subject: Consideration of the Asheville Area Arts Council's Application
to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Our Town Grant

Date: July 21, 2015

Summary:

Staff is asking for another review and consideration of support and grant match to the Asheville Area Arts Council's grant proposal for the 2016 National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Our Town Grant. The initial application deadline is September 21, 2015.

Background: City staff continues to work with the Buncombe Cultural Alliance (BCA) since its formation in 2013. The BCA is a forum, not an organization. The Asheville Area Arts Council (AAAC), with the agreement of BCA partnering organizations, provides the coordination and infrastructure support necessary to maintain the structure of the BCA. This allows the BCA to lend its full support to the collaborative efforts of arts organizations, artists and arts & cultural partners, and to not create a new, competing nonprofit organization or programming. The goal is that through the BCA forum, the broadest possible arts and cultural perspective can be attained.

The BCA uses a collaborative decision-making process for governance and strategic decisions. This maintains a level playing field across the diverse public/private organizations and individuals who participate. The AAAC participates as an equivalent member in decisions.

The AAAC captures and conveys the work of the BCA through the annual Creative Sector Summit, and helps to facilitate partnership opportunities and the delivery of strategies that arise as a result of the BCA's work.

The BCA agreed on an initial project to conduct a cultural asset inventory. It is a cross sector collaborative assessment of Buncombe County's cultural resources including but not limited to creative industry jobs and businesses, cultural amenities, public art, market opportunities, and arts and culture related resources such as nonprofit and educational programs and services, equipment, space, capital, and supply.

A Cultural Resources Asset Inventory captures important information about the scope of the economic activity of creative industry not captured in the area using traditional industry codes.

1. The data captured provides new information about the scale and nature of economic activity

related to cultural and creative industry based businesses, such as the export and sale locally of creative product, the number of artisans and creative industry businesses in the area, supply chain information, related professional services industries supported, available and related real estate use, and the like.

2. Information gathered provides feasibility for arts based development and related uses, such as artist workforce housing and studios.
3. The inventory creates a common use, business to business database of arts and culture partners.
4. The process identifies need and resources for the creation and support of new and existing strategy in order to support long range cultural planning, as seen in planning efforts such as Imagine Chattanooga 2020 (<http://imaginechattanooga2020.org/>).
5. Supports the implementation of existing plans such as the Asheville Downtown Master Plan (<http://www.ashevillenc.gov/Departments/EconomicDevelopment/ProjectsInitiatives.aspx>).
6. Provides cultural resource data to enhance existing GIS based tools such as the WNC Vitality Index (<http://www.wncvitalityindex.org/>) and GroWNC maps, similar to CultureBlocks.com in Philadelphia.
7. Increases the area's eligibility for additional Creative Place making funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, ArtPlace, SmArt Initiative, and similar funds.

The request to the National Endowment for the Arts will be \$80,000. Support is being sought from the city as part of the match in the amount up to \$25,000. Additional support is currently being requested. (See attached letter from the Asheville Area Arts Council on this strategy)

Review of National Endowment for the Arts and the Grant Requirements:

The National Endowment for the Arts is an independent federal agency that funds and promotes artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. The Our Town grant offers support for projects in two areas:

- Arts engagement, cultural planning, and design projects that represent the distinct character and quality of their communities.
- Projects that build knowledge about creative place making

To submit an application, eligible primary partners must be eligible local governments and local arts agencies or other departments, agencies or entities within an eligible local government. Only one application per city/town/county will be accepted. The Asheville Area Arts Council meets the criteria as an arts agency with proven three (3) year history of arts programming.

Initial application submission begins September 21, 2015 through Grants.gov. Then final application, program narrative and financial information will be due October 15, 2015.

Applications will be reviewed and award or rejection notification is April 2016 and earliest project start is August 1, 2016.

The grant requires a 1:1 match, which includes in-kind, cash and volunteering. Matching funds for this grant are not required at the initial submission of the application but must be confirmed prior to award (August 1, 2016).

The AAAC has worked with the Buncombe Cultural Alliance to seek matching funds in addition to the funds requested from the City of Asheville. As addressed in the letter from the AAAC, there has been outreach to other partners in support of this grant application and matching funds.

Staff Review:

- A successful grant application will provide funds for marketing, outreach, data collection and analysis, release and publication of reports.
- If awarded funds, AAAC and its partners will conduct a public process, coordinating with other national and local processes, to capture the scope of creative industry economic activity in Buncombe County. The AAAC and partners, including the North Carolina State Arts Council will identify data sets congruous with the NC Creative Economy work of 2007 and 2009, as well as the Economic Development Coalitions Arts and Economic Impact study, and the Americans for the Arts survey that produces Arts and Economic Prosperity V. The AAAC will manage the process with partners including public meetings, survey, marketing and outreach, the management of data, and reporting, and the creation of the database.
- This application will be presented to the Public Art & Cultural Commission July 23, 2015.
- Staff recognizes the need for the AAAC to build capacity in the performance of this grant. The AAAC understands that and understands that the ultimate goal of the NEA Our Town Grant is to support collaborative efforts that bring results for the entire community and addresses community goals.

Request for Consideration:

City staff is looking for your approval to move this item to City Council's August agenda which would provide ample time for the first deadline to NEA for the initial application submission of September 21, 2015.

Pros:

- The City of Asheville will not have fiduciary responsibility on this grant.
- The City would partner with the Asheville Area Arts Council and other arts, culture and entertainment agencies in the fulfillment of this grant programming.
- The inventory will provide important economic development data for future planning and funding.
- It will fulfill the inventory of this kind which was recommended in the 2009 Downtown Master Plan.
- It will serve to unify the creative sector around common goals and a great sense of viability.

- A work plan will be provided to the community for arts driven economic development.
- A framework/strategy will be provided for the support of creative industry entrepreneurship.
- It supports the fulfillment of Asheville's brand promise through enhanced cultural activity.
- It strengthens the community's eligibility for additional infrastructure funding.
- It provides a compass for the development of the identified Innovation Areas, especially the River Arts District.
- An opportunity is provided for marketing the importance of arts and culture, for citizen engagement.
- It builds on existing planning efforts and supports strategic implementation.
- It builds a greater level of partnership between City and creative constituency, County, and arts partners.
- Without the inventory, funds will be spent on creative industry activity with a long range vision and clearly identified goals and reduces the loss of valuable creative people and related businesses.
- It will reduce the impact of the loss of artists due to gentrification.

Cons:

- None noted at this time.

Fiscal Impact:

The fiscal impact of the City's support to this grant application is grant matching funds requested in the amount of \$25,000. Funding would impact FY17 and possibly FY18 if approved as the entire project timeline is two (2) years.

Council's Strategic Goals Achieved:

The grant will support City Council's goal to create economic development and community investment opportunities through partnerships, planning and incentives and to continue to support Asheville as a culturally diverse city.

Attachment:

(1) Letter of Request - Asheville Area Arts Council

Asheville Area Arts Council
1 Page Avenue Ste 143A
Asheville, NC
28801



HONORING TRADITION. DRIVING INNOVATION.

July 8th, 2015

To: Brenda Mills
Community & Economic Development
City of Asheville
P.O. Box 7148
Asheville, NC 28802

Dear Brenda,

Thank you for your recent, and ongoing, support of the Cultural Resources Asset Inventory Project, and for your participation in the Buncombe Cultural Alliance.

As you know, the Buncombe Cultural Alliance, convened at the Creative Sector Summit 2013, has been meeting for over two years, and has identified several ways that the community can move collaboratively forward in community and economic development using the arts. One issue that has come to the attention of BCA partners is the lack of complete information around the scope of economic activity in the creative sector of the economy, as much of the commercial activity is conducted by entrepreneurs and small business owners who are engaged in commercial activity not fully captured by traditional economic development methods. The scope of the activity of the creative sector crosses into the important realms of education, quality of life, and community development as well.

In a growing number of American cities, capturing this scope is being done through a process identified by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and others as "creative asset mapping", and funds are being made available at the scale of millions of dollars annually, to communities who are ready to move forward with arts driven economic development through Creative Placemaking paired with Cultural Planning of this kind. The BCA stands ready to convene partners to bring these funds to Buncombe County.

Thanks to your support of the BCA's efforts, the AAAC, as the backbone organization supporting the BCA, will be submitting an application to the NEA "Our Town" grant opportunity, which funds creative asset mapping, with the City of Asheville as its required primary government partner. Also engaged is the Town of Black Mountain, the Economic Development Coalition of the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce, Land of Sky Regional Council, *UNC Asheville's* National Environmental Modeling and Analysis Center, and the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources through the NC State Arts Council. Efforts to recruit more municipal partners are ongoing, with meetings pending. Additional funding is pending from the Community Foundation of Western

North Carolina. It is the assertion of the BCA that information gathered will support a viable approach to City goals for cultural resources, including the possibilities represented by arts based development, especially in the River Arts Innovation District.

The scope of the project, if funded by the NEA grant, would be approached as follows:

Cultural Resources Asset Inventory Project

Project Summary

The Cultural Resources Asset Inventory gathers data related to the scope of Buncombe County creative industry activity. The information gathered will be aggregated and reported with data gathered by related and concurrent studies, including The Americans for the Arts “Arts and Economic Prosperity V” (AAAC will partner on the current iteration of the study in 2016) and the 2015-16 Buncombe County Economic Development Coalition’s 5x5 based arts and economic impact study, to produce a new understanding of the scope of arts and culture related economic activity in Buncombe County.

The Inventory utilizes and enhances cultural resource preservation efforts such as the 2009 Downtown Asheville Master Plan and 2013 Land of Sky Regional Council GroWNC Project. Additionally, the Inventory builds upon related information from Blue Ridge National Heritage Area’s impact of cultural heritage tourism research and Asheville Convention and Visitor’s Bureau visitation research. The Inventory provides valuable insight into the implementation process for City of Asheville Innovation Districts, particularly the River Arts District, and supports outcomes recommended by the Alternatives to Gentrification in the East of the Riverway study, and Riverside Drive Development Plan.

The Inventory captures economic activity in a number of key creative industry occupations. The economic activity captured includes, but may not be limited to:

- Numbers of creative occupations and their business models county wide, including related supply and professional services
- Export of Buncombe County creative product
- Square footage of creative businesses in Buncombe County
- Scope of business resources: space for production, rehearsal, sales, performance, office; available equipment for production, marketing, creation and production, management; supply chain; professional development training in production, or business management; access to capital; employment opportunities service programs such as grants and computer labs; relevant resources, market and sales opportunities, and programs.
- Part time and contract activity in creative occupations
- Personal stories and artist profiles

Outputs

1. Policy change and other recommendations to

- support increased creative sector activity,
- retain Buncombe County artists,
- Mitigate the related undesired affects of gentrification and growth.

2. Data to enhance land use and development efforts. Key data from a demand perspective can be used by developers and investors to put together arts-based development products. These products qualify for a variety of national level funding opportunities.

Project Scope

Management:

- Asheville Area Arts Council: Will act as fiscal agent and manager. Hire consultant, hire support staff and subcontractors, manage logistics, work with team (consultant, Buncombe Cultural Alliance, Chamber EDC, City of Asheville and other Buncombe County municipalities, NC Arts Council) to determine data sets and methodology, design and manage outreach, conduct and/or support public meetings, produce report.
- Buncombe Cultural Alliance will serve in the capacity of oversight, and support outreach.

Budget Projection

Overall budget: \$160,000

Expenses:

- Lead consultant \$75,000 (RFP)
- Project management \$32,000 (Subcontract)
- Administrative \$10,000 (AAAC)
- Data Management \$15,000 (ie NEMAC)
- Marketing campaign and outreach \$12,000
- Public Meetings \$10,000
- Report production \$5,000
- Supplies \$1,000

Timeline: July 2016 through December 2017.

- (Application to NEA Our Town Grant due September 21st, 2015)
- NEA Our Town Awards announced 4/16, funds received 8/16.
- Data sets and partnerships finalized with partners, overseen by Buncombe Cultural Alliance, partners determine data needs to support projects and initiatives: 9/16-12/16.
- Choose lead consultancy/compose team: 9/16-11/16. The project will use local resource group for marketing and outreach design and implementation, support for process, and design. Team will work with national consultant(s) for best practices and development of recommendations.

- Hire managerial support: 10/16. Includes AAAC staff and independent project management.
- Finalize data set acquisition strategy: 11/16-1/17.
- Marketing and outreach: 1/17-3/17. Includes promotional materials and PR.
- Public meetings and survey: 4/17-9/17.
- Compilation and management of data into database: 9/17-12/17.
- Coordinate results with NC Arts Council, Arts NC for advocacy: 1/18-3/18.
- Presentation at Creative Sector Summit: March 2018.
- Final report published: June 2018.
- Tools online enhanced 2018.

Approach

Fiscal management of the project is the responsibility of the Asheville Area Arts Council with oversight of staff from the arts council board, and in coordination with the Buncombe Cultural Alliance.

A lead consultant will be chosen through RFP process. The RFP process will be designed in coordination with, and approval of, the Buncombe Cultural Alliance which includes the City of Asheville and coordinated with the North Carolina State Arts Council, and managed by the Asheville Area Arts Council.

The lead consultant will:

- Oversee the design of outreach and marketing,
- Create outreach strategy including public meetings and survey,
- Adjust the process for effective acquisition of desired data,
- Apply national best practice to the acquisition of data including coordination with national trends and within the guidelines of the National Endowment for the Arts Our Town guidelines for creative place making, and according to the goals and initiatives of project partners including the City of Asheville and other Buncombe County municipalities, Buncombe County, Chamber, and BCA,
- Oversee the management of data,
- Develop recommendations for partners based on project criteria to help meet partner goals,
- Share national best practices and trends with team,
- Facilitate public meetings,
- Meet with partners to enhance strategy,
- Provide data and written content for final report,
- Present at Creative Sector Summit 2017.

Project management will be the responsibility of the Asheville Area Arts Council. The arts council will apply project administration, logistics, strategy, and planning, and will hire and oversee the work of the project manager.

The Asheville Area Arts Council with the project manager will develop partner relationships and help partners reach goals, as well as managing subcontractors and vendors, including the process of managing and organizing data sets for reporting and output tools.

The Asheville Area Arts Council with lead consultant and partners, utilizing marketing and design professionals, will coordinate and manage the marketing campaign to generate community participation, and survey and data acquisition tools.

Outreach

Recommended forums for public input:

- Individual artists, visual.
- Individual artists, performance
- Venue (galleries, festivals, clubs, theaters, etc)
- Arts related businesses
- Arts organizations & educational institutions
- Digital arts & photography, graphic production, marketing firms and businesses
- Arts & tourism, hospitality partners
- Arts partners (economic development, government)

Tools for this process Include but are not limited to:

- Marketing campaign
- Public meetings
- Online surveys
- AAAC website
- Social media

Thank you for your ongoing partnership with the Asheville Area Arts Council through the Buncombe Cultural Alliance and Creative Sector Summit. It is exciting for us at the AAAC to know that our efforts to support the financial success of creative industry entrepreneurs may be met with policy and strategy community-wide that will ensure the impact of their efforts, and benefit the entire community as a result.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kitty Love', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kitty Love
Executive Director